Progressive Calvinism

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VOLUME II JULY, 1956 NUMBER 7

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Lack of Intellectual Respectability

On July 2 we had lunch with a representative of a Catholic University. A week later on July 9 we had lunch with a representative of a distinguished Protestant school. Both men were interested in money.

The second man asked us for the names of business men who might be happy to have their corporations contribute to an orthodox Protestant school. Slowly and carefully we went over the long list of business men who control the policies of their corporations. We were not able to come up with the name of a single man whom we would consider a good prospect from whom to get contributions.

Published monthly by Progressive Calvinism League; founders: Frederick Nymeyer, John Van Mouwerik and Martin B. Nymeyer. Responsibility for articles assumed by author only. Annual subscription rate: students, $1.00; others, $2.00. Bound copy of 1955 issues: students, $1.00; others, $2.00. Send subscriptions to Progressive Calvinism League, 366 East 166th Street, South Holland, Illinois, U. S. A.

In the case of the Catholic, the situation was different. In this case we were not hesitant for a minute. We provided the names at once. We included *all* the Catholics we know.

Why the difference in these two situations? Are Protestants less loyal to their churches than Catholics to theirs? That certainly is part of the answer. In these parts many Protestant business men no longer consider it an *honor* to belong to a church. They do not talk about their church connections with any note of pride. You can work with them for years and not hear one reference to their church connections or their religious ideas. The situation may be different in other parts of the country.

(Another reason for difficulty in supplying names of potential Protestant contributors is because Protestants are divided into several denominations. Their contributions are available usually only to their own small group. The Catholics constitute a larger community.)

We have pondered why successful Protestant professional and business men have drifted away from their churches. We believe it is because there is a lack of intellectual respectability in what the churches teach. The churches unfortunately teach many things collateral to the Christian religion which happen to be not true or sensible or even plausible. The way most men adjust to such a situation is not to expose the errors or the absurdities but simply to lose interest; not to be active; to ignore the church; send a nice check but play golf on Sunday. The contribution often masks a basic intellectual contempt.

This "decline and fall of the churches" has been going on for a long time and will take considerable additional time.

In a denomination as the one to which the founders of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM belong there is a similar lack of intellectual respectability. There is evidence that the courses in philosophy, ethics, political science, history, economics, sociology contain confused ideas. Generally, the educational influences bearing on the youth of the denomination are (1) naive in regard to what the

church has taught in the past, and (2) confused in its synthesis (splicing together) of modern knowledge with Biblical teaching. The various influences affecting the ideas of young people have come to be controlled substantially by those intellectuals whose ideas will in the future be discovered by youth, when they mature and do some thinking for themselves, to be disreputable from an intellectual viewpoint. The current enthusiasms of students are not significant; it is unwise to be optimistic about the future on the basis of sophomoric enthusiasms for syntheses of naive interpretations of Scripture with pseudo-social science. The enthusiasm will wear off and there will be the mental depression resulting from disillusionment.

Examination of what is published in college papers presages that the ultimate dissolution of religious enthusiasms must be widely expected. Eventually when mature, many students will abandon what they will realize was never intellectually respectable.

The intellectual respectability of what is taught in religious colleges could wisely be broadly investigated and appraised. fn

One Phase Of Economics — The Relationship Of Men To Things

An Easy Definition Of Economics

The dictionary says that economics is the science that deals with (1) the production of wealth, and (2) the distribution and consumption of wealth.

Economics can also be defined as the science dealing with prices, production, labor, capital, land, money, costs, profits, and the shares which people get out of jointly working together to produce wealth.

But we wish to set economics off against a larger background, and in that sense define it differently. Our purpose is to address ourselves to a special group of people, a group among Christians known as Calvinists.

Economics In Its Proper Setting

In PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we have in a somewhat discretionary manner divided the field of Calvinism (or Christianity) into two parts:

(1) the relation of men to God, and

(2) the relation of men to men.

We have, also in a discretionary manner, designated the first as the field of *religion,* and the second as the field of *ethics.* Further, we have said that we shall not extensively enter the first field, and we have indicated that it is our intention to consider primarily ethics — the relation of men to men.

These divisions are not only in a sense discretionary; they are also inadequate. Our readers will readily be able to understand that from what follows.

There is, in fact, a very important relationship that is practically lost sight of by our two-fold division. This important relationship is the relationship of men to things, the relationship of men to the natural world around us.

This relationship of men (not to God or to men but) to things is in a certain sense the primary field of economics.

The most famous economist in the preceding generation, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk (1851-1914), wrote an article in the January 1891 *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* entitled, "The Austrian Economists." He declared (our italics):

> To be sure, the *classical* economists well knew to what point all their explanations [in economics] must be traced, namely, to the care of mankind for its own well-being, which, . . . is the ultimate motive-force of all economic action. But owing to a certain circumstance the . . . explanation, [which they gave] . . . was always wrong. That circumstance was the following: A Crusoe has to do *only with goods;* in modern economic life we have to do (1) with goods and (2) with human beings from

whom we obtain the goods we use — by means of exchange, cooperation and the like. The economy of a Crusoe is explained when we succeed in showing what relation existed between [his] well-being and material commodities, and what attitude the care for [his] well-being required [him] to take toward such material commodities. [But] to explain the modern economic order there is, apparently, need of two processes: 1st, just as in Crusoe's economy, we must understand the relation of our interests *to external goods;* 2nd, we must seek to understand the laws, according to which we pursue our interests when they are *entangled with the interests of others.*

No one has ever been deluded into thinking that this second process [the relation of men to men] is not difficult and involved — not even the classical economists. But, on the other hand, the classical economists fatally under-rated the difficulties of the first process [namely, the relation of men to things]. They believed that as regards the relation of men to external goods, there was nothing at all to be explained, . . . Men need goods to supply their wants; men desire them and assign to them in respect of their utility a value in use. That is all the classical economists knew or taught in regard to the relation of men to goods. . . .

It is a fact, however, that the relation of men to goods is by no means . . . simple and uniform. The modern theory of final [marginal] utility in its application to cost of production, complementary goods, etc., shows that the relation between our well-being and goods is capable of countless degrees, and all these degrees exert a force in our efforts to obtain goods by exchange with others. Here yawns the great and fatal chasm in the classical theory; it attempts to show how we pursue our interest in goods in relationship to other men *without* [first] *thoroughly understanding the interest* [which we have in those goods themselves] . . .

Böhm-Bawerk's proposition is: the relationship of men to things is very complex and important, and was never correctly explained by famous earlier economists, known as classical economists (Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, Mills, etc.).

Men And Their Environment

Men have, then, three potential fields of action:

1. Their relation to God (religion).
2. Their relation to fellow men (ethics and some phases of economics).
3. Their relation to things (another phase of economics.

Böhm-Bawerk says: economics is interested in both numbers (2) and (3). And the special point he makes is this: *you cannot solve number* (2), *the relation of men to fellow men, unless you first properly understand the relation of men to things, number* (3).

We wholeheartedly agree with that; the relationship of men to things is far more complex than people realize. We ourselves do not think highly of what Calvinist intellectuals generally teach on the relation of men to things.

That unfavorable opinion is not because of what Scripture teaches, but because of what men have naively interpreted the teaching of Scripture to be. It is not that we object to what Scripture teaches, but we object to what men have *interpreted* Scripture to say.

Economics As An Aid In Interpreting Scripture

Economists make the claim for economics that it is a science. Presumably, as a science it has some knowledge to present, some insight into reality to outline. It ought, then, to have some contribution to make to the correct interpretation of Scripture, as distinguished from the interpretations of Scripture based on the naive observations of minds untrained in regard to the relation of men to things.

Economics is a relatively young science; say that it is 200 years at the most. It could not then, before the year 1750 have made a significant contribution to the correct interpretation of Scripture. It is our observation that even though economics could influence the interpretation of Scripture significantly only for the last 200 years, that even in those 200 years it has not much influenced the interpretation by theologians and moral philosophers. The more is the pity, because economics (except pseudo-economics in violation of logic, experience and revelation) can make a large contribution to an enlightening — a progressive — interpretation of Scripture.

Economics And Scripture

Scripture does not shun economic problems. (In fact, it *could* not do so.) The teaching begins in the second chapter of Genesis and is continued to the end of the Scripture; the last book in the Bible declares itself to be a book describing the relationship in the next world not only of men to God but also of men to the *then* world, the new environment. It talks extensively about that new environment.

In this and succeeding issues we propose to analyze briefly what Scripture teaches about three questions which are not primarily religion (relationship of men to God) nor primarily ethics (relationship of men to men) but are initially problems of economics — the relation of men to their environment; or they are strictly individual rather than social. The three subjects are: (1) Work, (2) Pain, (3) Death.

The Fall Of Man

The first great event after creation is the Fall of Man, an expression used to designate the first sin of Adam and Eve. This event is described as follows:

> *Genesis 3:2-21.* And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,

God hath said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden.

And Jehovah God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the

> tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

The Fall of Man involved a relationship of Adam and Eve to *things,* the trees in the garden of Eden. (This was not the only relationship.)

Orthodox Christians accept this account of the Fall as being *literal* history; the nonorthodox accept the account as being *symbolic.* For example, a famous theologian as the late J. Gresham Machen accepted the account literally; and similarly, another famous contemporary theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, accepts the account only symbolically; he does not consider this to be a historical event.

We propose in what follows to pursue the orthodox interpretation and to consider three questions:

(1) Work *before* and *after* the Fall of Man;
(2) Pain *before* and *after* the Fall of Man; and
(3) Death *before* and *after* the Fall of Man.

Of course, in the compass of brief popular articles in a monthly publication, it is not possible to treat these subjects exhaustively, but only in the barest outline. fn

Work And Sin

Work Not Primarily Caused By Sin

We begin by asking the question: is work the consequence of sin or is it in a primary sense caused by sin?

Our answer is a plain *no.* Work was not *caused* primarly by sin but is only aggravated by sin.

God And Work And Sin

If work were caused by sin, then God must be (we speak respectfully and are merely outlining the logic) a sinner because he works. Christ declares:

> *John 5:17.* My father worketh even until now, and I work.

However, the term *work* should be defined. As mere *activity?* As *purposeful* activity? As purposeful activity *pursued to the point of unpleasantness* (or disutility, as the economists would say) or even exhaustion?

That God pursued a purposeful activity (that is *worked*) to the point of disutility could be inferred from two Biblical statements (our italics):

> *Genesis 1:31.* And God saw everything that he made, and, behold, it was very good.

> *Genesis 2:2.* And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

This idea is repeated in the Decalogue in the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:11) where it says that Jehovah *rested* the seventh day (our italics).

We reiterate, therefore, the broad and significant proposition that as far as God is concerned his *work,* his activity of a purposeful character which he pursued in creation in a sustained manner and followed by *rest,* was not *caused* by sin.

It should be admitted, at once and of course, that the character, activity and circumstances of God are not really subject to human description or genuine human understanding. This general fact places an enormous restriction on our comprehension of God and of his purposes and activity.

Man And Work And Sin

It is, therefore, more significant to ask: is the work *of man* caused by sin?

Returning to Moses's account in Genesis, we learn that work was not caused by sin (our italics):

> *Genesis 1:28.* And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The use of the verb *subdue* indicates that man was to put forth a purposeful effort to make the natural things of the world serve him. This is obviously *work.*

The same idea is later more clearly told (our italics):

> *Genesis 2:15.* And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *dress* it and *keep* it.

This instruction to go to work — to *dress* and to *keep* the garden — is before the Fall of Man. Man had to go to work from the very beginning.

He was placed in a "garden," generally *assumed* to have been better than any present day park in the world. But that is purely an *assumption.* We consider the garden to have been a lush but uncultured wilderness; there is nothing in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation which requires an interpretation that the garden was a park. There was not, in our opinion, ten square feet of good bluegrass lawn neatly cut and trimmed in the whole place; and what garden looks good if its borders are not trimmed! Common sense makes it clear that a very primitive creature without tools or practical knowledge found himself in a lush jungle in the swampy delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

We are not neglecting Moses's declaration at the end of the first chapter in Scripture:

> *Genesis 1:31a.* And God saw all that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good . . .

If this means that everything was "perfect" in the sense that Adam did not need to go to work, why did God "command" Adam to go to work? Because work was good for man in a moral sense but not useful in an economic sense? That idea is, we believe, unreasonable: man had to go to work because the garden of Eden needed work on it if man was eventually to get enough to eat. Consider the various kinds of societies and the specific society in which Adam lived; here is a list of the societies and their ranks:

1. An *industrial-commercial* society which is "higher" than an *agricultural* society.

2. An *agricultural* society which is "higher" than a *pastoral* society.

3. A *pastoral* society which is "higher" than a *hunting and fishing* society.

4. A *hunting and fishing* society which is higher than a *berry-gathering or fruit picking society.*

5. A *berry-gathering and a fruit-picking* society, which is the very lowest economic society that there is.

Adam and Eve began at the very bottom. And Moses "makes no bones" about it; he is a robust realist and historian, not a romancer and embellisher.

The popular imagination is, however, a long way away from Moses and his simple narrative. The unrealistic Bible story books for children have traditionally shown Adam taking his ease under beautiful trees on a velvet well-trimmed lawn with Eve engaged in the trifling activity of standing, reaching up, and picking off fruit with one hand, and simultaneously handing some to Adam.

Instead of showing a false picture of life in the garden of Eden, children's story books would do well to show a realistic picture. Here were two very primitive people, who did not have

clothes or know how to make them, who had no tools, who did not know how to start a fire or to cook and who subsisted on raw fruits, who had everything to learn about "subduing" the earth. Obviously they began at the most primitive stage, under wilderness conditions, gathering fruit off trees and shrubs.

Such fruit did not drop into their mouth. They had to *work* from the very beginning by picking the fruit. If they had not yet sinned, they nevertheless did have to work.

Why Adam Had To Work Even If He Had Not Sinned

Not only did Moses clearly state that *from the very first* Adam and Eve were obliged to work, it could be inferred according to plain logic that sooner or later even though there had been no sin, work would have become inescapable. Work was *inevitable* and much surer than death. Let us take a look at the *facts* and at popular assumptions regarding them and see where we shall come out:

1. God commanded the human race to breed and "replenish" the earth.

2. There were *presumably* to be no deaths among men (see, however, comments on this question in a future issue).

3. Consequently, population could only increase more and more. The increase obviously would be *unlimited.*

4. But the world was and is *finite,* with a circumference of 25,000 miles. Most of the surface of the earth has been and is covered with water. The garden of Eden, although a wilderness, was one of the few places where aboriginal primitive humans could survive, climate and food supply being taken as controlling factors.

5. The infinite number of nondying men and women and steady births would sooner or later have forced the population to fight for sustenance by *hard labor.*

The logic of the situation is inescapable and conclusive. Work was necessary for an expanding human race. *The necessity for work antedated sin.*

We come then to the firm conclusion that sin is not the cause of the necessity of work. Work was and always would be *necessary* in a sinless world (except one in which population did not increase and where food literally fell into the mouths of humans, the climate was always balmy and never cold or violent, where there was potable water also dropping into their mouths, and other impossible requirements without end or sense).

What then can be the only relationship between sin and work? This and only this: sin has merely increased (1) the amount of the inescapable work; (2) the inefficiency and ineptness of the work; and (3) the consequent painfulness (disutility) of the work. The basic *cause* for the necessity of work is the general character of men and the character, including its finiteness, of the world.

Nota Bene

When we strictly follow Moses in regard to early human conditions and look at Adam as a primitive man in a primitive environment, some readers may jump to a wholly erroneous conclusion against which we wish to go on record.

The inference might be that we consider Adam to have been semi-human, a Neanderthal man, for example. Not at all.

Some years ago a theological professor visited at the house. In our discussions he insisted very strongly on an idea, towit: Adam had all the innate mental abilities of his descendants; he was fully a human being, a *Homo sapiens*. His primitiveness was not in his abilities, but in the stage of his culture.

We assured our friend that we were in full, unqualified agreement. We were affirming things altogether different, namely:

1. Moses says that the original man was primitive in culture — not in ability.

2. The pre-Fall world required work in order to support even Adam and Eve.

3. Work in itself is a good thing and not a bane and not cursed anywhere in Scripture.

4. Sin increased the need for work because folly causes work, and man because of sin became less effective, and consequently the painfulness and disutility of work were greatly increased.

Adam in short was a potentially cultured man who had not yet become cultured. He was in the garden of Eden not even a stone-age man but a fruit and berry gatherer. *At least that is what Moses declares.*

We conclude, therefore, that work *intrinsically* is a consequence of the relation of men to things, and not a consequence of a good or bad relationship of men to God or of men to men. A bad relationship of men to God and of men to men merely increases work and increases the painfulness of work. If such maladjustment of men to God and of men to men becomes very serious and stubborn, then the "mere" increase in work to which we have just referred can become calamitous, catastrophic, suicidal. If, for example, a society hardens its heart to promote theft by inflation (see June 1956 issue), the result will be calamitous eventually. God, Scripture declares, is not mocked. A society's sin "will find it out."

It is not work that is bad. It is that part of work which is directly the result of sin that is bad. Fail to make this distinction and all thinking on the relation of men to things becomes twisted and false. The result is that men (and churches) hold nonsensical ideas on practical matters, allegedly based on Scripture but in reality out of harmony with Scripture.

Work is inescapable. To work means that there is a purpose. That there is a purpose means that something wished to be attained is not yet attained. That something is not yet attained is not proof of sin; it is merely proof of finiteness. Mere finiteness is not sin. And God "works," too, not because he is finite, but because when he concerned himself with a finite creation some activity — work — on his part was (shall we say) "requisite" toward helping his finite creation attain its finite ends.

To teach that the necessity of all work is the result of sin is to teach a doctrine which is nonscriptural and which reduces Christianity's claim to intellectual respectability. fn

Work Is, Or Should Be, Pleasure

The great men we have learned to know during our life have all been or are terrific workers. They are slave drivers — of themselves.

Nor are they easy taskmasters of others. These men have high standards of achievement — great work needs to be done, it needs to be done with thoroughness; with the minimum of time and effort; labor and materials need to be husbanded — that is, economized; there must be no waste. It is as if these men say: "Work for the night [of death] cometh in which no man can work." These great men, we have observed, never "drive" others so hard as they drive themselves. They are all really kindhearted and reasonable; but they certainly believe in work and compared to ordinary men, they are hard "drivers."

None of these great men believes in work for work's sake. They believe only in work as a means to an end. They are consequently careful regarding what work they do. They do not wish to be industrious about trifles; they are not "hemstitchers"; instead they are industrious about *important* matters. Consequently, they achieve much.

One of the greatest of the great men the writer has known, in casual conversation recently, declared that *work is a pleasure,* and that it is only work that makes life worth living. (This was, of course, an interpretation of mundane affairs in this life and was not intended as a comprehensive philosophy of life.)

There is a certain type of engineers known as *industrial engineers.* These are engineers whose direct and avowed purpose is to reduce the amount of work necessary to attain a given result. They use time and motion studies, improved machine locations, etc., to accomplish their ends. But the ultimate aim is not to eliminate work but to eliminate *unnecessary* work, so that the freed effort can be used to accomplish a new purpose never previously attainable because the old work consumed all the available time.

Men should like to work. Great men enjoy their work. Scripture repeatedly recommends work, and industriousness, and thrift and it condemns sloth and idleness and irresponsibility. fn

The Universal "Welfareshortage"

The term *welfareshortage* is self-descriptive, that is, there is a shortage of welfare. We wish to use the term always in a special and emphatic sense. We shall therefore throughout this article write the two words as one and use italics.

The term is an exact translation of a word we originally read in the Dutch language, namely, *welvaartstekort*. In all ages, in all climes, among all people, under all conditions, there is even among the richest of nations and the richest of men a permanent, inescapable *welfareshortage*.

Moses taught that there would be a permanent and universal *welfareshortage*. This idea is, however, not accepted by many religious leaders. By denying this Biblical doctrine of a permanent *welfareshortage* (as taught by Moses) those leaders establish a (false) "ground" or reason for interventionism into economic affairs by governments.

The unscriptural interventionisms taught by religious leaders cannot be adequately refuted merely by denying their final *conclusions*. It is necessary to examine their basic *premises*. Those basic *premises* are seldom stated; they are tacitly assumed.

The uncritical do not realize that those unwarranted premises are involved, and that they are contrary to Scripture or to the science of economics; people generally are therefore misled into accepting the conclusions of the interventionists.

In this article we shall consider what three men hold regarding the idea of a universal *welfareshortage*. Those three men are:

Dr. C. A. Verryn Stuart
Moses
Richard Postma

C. A. Verryn Stuart

C. A. Verryn Stuart was a Netherlander who died a few years ago. He was in his lifetime professor of economics at the State University in Utrecht (Netherlands). In 1920 he wrote a basic textbook in economics which during his lifetime went through six printings. The title for the sixth revised edition is: *De Wetenschap der Economie en de Grondslagen van het Sociaal-Economisch Leven* (De Erven F. Bohn N.V., Haarlem, 1947). In English this title would read: *The Science of Economics and the Foundations of Social-Economic Life.*

This textbook in economics we consider to be an excellent one.

We regret that Verryn Stuart was an agnostic, considering it to be impossible to have any knowledge of God, and declaring that men created God by their imaginations rather than that God had created men. He explained men's belief in God as a "tragic compulsion to come to an explanation of life itself." He considered it impossible to come to such an explanation.

There is one "reason" for unbelief, as Verryn Stuart's, which continually disturbs us badly. When the Christian religion pretends that those of its interpretations which happen to conflict with both Scripture and common sense are nevertheless Christianity, and when someone who is not a Christian sees the conflict with common sense, it is understandable that he then also rejects not only the nonsensical idea but Christianity with it. It may be expected that false Calvinism and false Christianity will continue to tend to make religious sceptics of many sound economists. In that sense, the "blood" of these economists is on the head of Christians.

But regardless of Verryn Stuart's scepticism, induced by the follies of unscriptural interpretations of Scripture or by some other cause, he is on absolutely solid ground in his teaching regarding the relation of men to things. Verryn Stuart teaches that there is a universal *welfareshortage,* universal in time and place. This is a very fundamental idea. We shall, in what follows, quote briefly from the first chapter of Verryn Stuart's book, and explain his ideas. Readers can proceed in the assumption that in this matter of *welfareshortage* we are in unqualified agreement with this famous Dutch economist. (Quotations are our translation.)

Verryn Stuart On Insatiable Human Wants

Verryn Stuart writes:

> The science of economics concerns itself with that specific fact of experience that men, everywhere and always, originally unconsciously but upon further development more and more consciously, *observe wants* (needs) in themselves.

This statement pertains to the relation of men to things (physical and otherwise). We begin then with the basic idea that men "everywhere and always" have wants which they wish to have satisfied. This is a fundamental psychological and physical fact.

Verryn Stuart later proceeds as follows:

> Mankind realizes, if it is to avoid extermination, the requirements of supplies of food, shelter and clothing. In proportion as increasing culture brings a civilized man to deeper self-knowledge, he becomes conscious of numerous new needs in addition to the better satisfaction of old needs which may be considered as already supplied.

We remember reading years ago in a Calvinist magazine the conclusions of a philosopher arrived at during his leisure while cruising on a boat. The idea was that by means of modern conveniences which save time we should have more leisure and time to be philosophers and to devote to church activity. Every labor-saving device — airplanes, refrigerators, carpet sweepers, etc., — all these should result in more time for the comtemplative life and men's societies and missionary activity. But this idea is naive because it does not realize the growth of *new* wants. Every time one want is satisfied a new want crops up. The *wants* of men are not a fixed quantity as this philosopher assumed, but an infinite quantity. For most men, if they have a radio but television is available, a television set becomes a "necessity." As Verryn Stuart says, "numerous new wants" stand at the threshold of every man's mind all the time.

Verryn Stuart then goes on to declare that there is infinite variety in the wants of men. He says that it is not possible to classify those wants into a "system" which fits everybody. He

writes that men "value" things differently, both material goods and immaterial goods, and he adds that the same man himself continually changes so that "values" are in a constant state of flux even for the same man. (This is one reason why interventionism (*dirigisme*) and socialism cannot be satisfactory to men.)

The Idea Of Welfare

Next, Verryn Stuart defines welfare. He says:

> *Welfare* (prosperity, *welvaart*) then is: the capacity of a man to satisfy the desires of which he has become conscious. The idea expresses a condition of balance between wants and the means of satisfying them.
>
> However, because of the character of conscious life which is a continuous wanting, the attainment of balance is not accomplished; there is only a pursuit of balance. Every satisfied want makes way for an active new want.

Verryn Stuart goes on to say that, in a broadening prosperity, wants continue to increase unabated, or even faster than prosperity itself. Further, that satisfaction of one want begets new wants, as for example, a new house creates a psychological want for new furniture; or improvement in transportation creates a demand for week-end travel.

Every time that there is progress in the satisfying of wants there are new successor wants in their places.

That the wants of men are, in a practical sense, insatiable is true for Christians and non-Christians, young and old, wise and foolish. Wants are irrepressible; satisfaction of one want merely results in new wants bobbing up. There can, therefore, *never* be a lack of psychological demand, which would stall the economic mechanism and cause a depression. NEVER.

Inadequate Means To Satisfy Wants

Whereas wants are infinite and *in total* are not satiable, the situation is altogether different in regard to the specific means of satisfying those wants. These means are limited. They are never able to cover the wants. It is impossible to think in terms of a

permanent gratification of all wants. It is this crucial imbalance between wants and means to satisfy wants which causes the universal *welfareshortage*. Verryn Stuart writes:

> And so the existence of a persistent *welfareshortage* is one of the basic characteristics of the life of men.

Asceticism (a policy of suppressing the wish of satisfying wants) is, of course, one way of endeavoring to solve the problem. But asceticism has very few devotees. Asceticism as a solution to the problem of wants and their satisfaction is foreign to the character of the Christian religion. American *Christians* have as many gadgets to satisfy their wants as do American *non-Christians*. Great civilizations are not based on asceticism; to the contrary, great civilizations are based on the arousal of many demands and the effort to satisfy those demands by intense labor. Verryn Stuart quotes Cicero and Clive Day. Cicero declared that culture is the highest not where wants are the least and most-easily satisfied, but where wants have been enlarged and can be satisfied only by great effort. Day is quoted as follows:

> Civilized people owe their advancement to the fact that they have wanted so many things and have been willing to work to get them . . .

Verryn Stuart goes on to say:

> Life is change, and that change develops largely out of the lack of satisfaction with what exists, out of the struggle to adjust better and more completely, with the conditions which life presents. In this lack of satisfaction with what exists lies the incentive for all progress, because we know that in large part our desires can be satisfied by effort. Desire for what can be attained arouses devoted effort. Only the desire for what is known to be unattainable embitters and enfeebles.

The Ratio Of Wants And Of Means To Satisfy Wants

It may be possible to measure the means used to gratify wants. But it is not possible to measure the wants themselves. They are subjective, changing, irrepressible; if satisfied or frustrated in one way, they break out at another point. Whereas means are

finite, wants are infinite. There is, therefore, a permanent imbalance between *wants* and *means* (*goods*). It is that permanent imbalance which constitutes the indestructible *welfareshortage*. It is this *welfareshortage* which is the incentive to labor and effort.

Moses First Taught There Is A Welfareshortage

Moses (c. 1520-1400 B.C.) was no modern man as was Verryn Stuart. Nor was he a technical economist. But on the economic question of the relation of men to material and immaterial things Moses and Verryn Stuart are in perfect agreement. Both men are plain-spoken on the permanent existence of a universal *welfareshortage*. Moses wrote:

> *Genesis 3:17-19*. . . . in toil shalt thou eat of it [the ground] all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

This statement through Moses gets down to one simple proposition: mankind will be subject to an absolutely insurmountable *welfareshortage*. (1) Man's wants will always exceed his means; (2) he will acquire the *means* to gratify his *wants* only by hard labor; and (3) the circumstances will be partially unfavorable (because of "thorns and thistles").

This language is that of a simple, primitive economy. But it is universally true. Granted that in an air conditioned building there is no "sweat of the face," work is still necessary. Granted that chemicals will easily kill thorns and thistles, work is not to be escaped. Even though capital (labor-saving devices) is multiplied and remultiplied, there is still the fact that "in toil" man acquires the means required for existence.

Moses was right for several reasons:

1. The *means* to gratify wants are limited and always will be in this life.

2. The *wants* are unlimited in the sense that human nature grows a new want or wants to replace every satisfied want.

3. The folly of men greatly impairs the best way to satisfy wants, which best way is by division of labor (that is, co-operation), by noncoercion, by free exchange, by truthfulness and by respect for property in persons and goods. In other words, sin greatly aggravates the amount of work required to satisfy wants.

And so Moses, declaring that the statement is a direct quotation from God, warningly proclaims that there is only one sound view of the relation of men to things, namely, that there will be an inescapable, perpetual *welfareshortage*.

Some Christians may believe that if there were no sin there would be no *welfareshortage* in this life and in this world. It is impossible for us to accept that proposition. All logic is against it. It is contrary to knowledge of the physical world about us. It is contrary to our self-knowledge of our own pschology. It is contrary to Scripture because Scripture indicates that Adam had to work before he "fell." It is also contrary to Scripture, by inference, to believe that God, who is recorded by Christ to work regularly, would create some paltry human beings who would not have to work. The Creator works and his creatures are to be idle! No!

We come then to the conclusion that Verryn Stuart and all modern economists are merely at this late date repeating what Scripture taught long ago. In this life in this world there is no escape from a *welfareshortage*.

We plan at some other time to devote attention to the *extent* to which sin has aggravated the need for work. That subject is beyond the scope of this article.

Richard Postma And Overproduction

Mr. Richard Postma is a contemporary, occupying an influential place in the Christian Reformed church, namely, that of Editor-in-Chief of *The Young Calvinist,* monthly organ of the Young Calvinist Federation. He is also known as the Youth Leader in the denomination.

Mr. Postma's ideas are generally interventionist and in our opinion exactly to that extent in violation of Scripture. In PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we, being strict constructionists of Scripture, consider all forms of intervention (*coercion*) to be a plain violation of the Sixth Commandment, (Thou shalt not kill [coerce]). We follow not only Moses in this, but also Christ, who declared, Blessed are the meek [who do not coerce] for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5); that is, those who are meek shall be prosperous. That is exactly what all the great economists of the past and the present teach.

Some years ago (1953) we had a conference on another matter with Postma, but in the casual conversation at the end he expressed an opinion about the business situation. He was apprehensive about the business outlook. There was, he believed, overproduction of automobiles and of household appliances and of other products. He expressed the opinion that the cause of depressions—and it was a depression which he feared— is *overproduction.* And because overproduction is the cause of depressions the government should engage in more regulation (that is, should intervene more, be more *dirigistic,* be more coercive and restrictive in regard to business.

Postma's first proposition is: overproduction causes depressions. His second proposition is: therefore, the government should intervene (violate the Sixth Commandment!) in order to prevent overproduction and by so doing keep business prosperous. It appears to the unwary that *regulation* is to make and keep business prosperous, but actually the interventionist program turns out to be *restrictionism,* that is, measures to reduce production.

But what now is left of God's statement, according to Moses, of a permanent, universal, inescapable *welfareshortage?* Postma begins his reasoning with an assumption of overproduction, which is flatly contradictory to that statement of God.

Not only is the Postma theory of overproduction contrary to Scripture; it is also contrary to common sense and common observation. Overproduction? What Christian Reformed family is not waiting until tomorrow to obtain something that it wants?

How many Christian Reformed families have all kinds of needs which are urgent, but who do not have what they urgently need because it is not being produced and because they cannot buy it?

And if that is true in this great and rich United States, what about the hundreds of millions in abject poverty all over the world? Everywhere there is a request for aid, for assistance, for charity. The world wide *welfareshortage* is staggering. We dissent therefore from the idea that we need "intervention" to prevent overproduction, because overproduction causes depressions.

Not only is the popular phobia about *overproduction* contrary to Scripture and contrary to common sense, it was in this instance also a proposition contradicted by the course of events. Production of automobiles, of household appliances and production in general have *increased* since 1953. In 1955 the production of automobiles was 29% higher than in 1953. In regard to overproduction Postma was wrong, as interventionists usually are; interventionists have the halucination that they are qualified to regulate, to "intervene," because of some special intelligence which permits them to analyze the present soundly and forecast the future correctly. This is the self-delusion or the pretense of visionaries. The governments of the United States and of the Netherlands and of England and of practically all countries are well-staffed with such visionaries.

This error of Postma that the trouble with prosperity is not a *welfareshortage* but overproduction is at the very opposite end from Moses of the possible interpretations. Moses said: there is not and will not be enough. Postma's idea is: there is and there will be too much. Moses said: work and produce. Postma's idea is: we need government intervention to *restrict* overproduction. If Moses was right, Postma is wrong.

There is a most self-deceptive error made by those who favor *interventionism* as a system for the economic ordering of society. (In regard to how *interventionism* differs from capitalism and socialism see June 1955 issue of Progressive Calvinism, pages 172-173.) *Interventionism* is supposed to be farsighted *planning* and wonderfully wise *regulation* for attaining prosperity. Actually, universal experience with this type of *planning* and *regulation* has been that it finally turns out to be directed toward *restricting*

production. That is what it *always* ends up being. And along with this there is a sure consequence, namely, prices are raised to the consumer — the widows, orphans, preachers, teachers, those who are retired, etc.

One of the simplest and soundest of propositions is that: Interventionism is restrictionism—a program to reduce production. See the book by A. S. J. Baster, entitled *The Little Less* (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 36 Essex Street, Strand W. C. 2, London, England).

We shall reserve for another time the discussion of various theories of booms and depresssions, of the ups and downs of business known as the Business Cycle. The explanation of the business cycle is not overproduction, nor underconsumption, nor lack of purchasing power, etc. The explanation will be found to be very simple—a plain, deliberate and damnable violation of the Law of God, namely theft and falsehood—two sins which God through Moses forbade.

But one word more about the Postma theory of overproduction. What is the logical error he perpetrated? It is this: he was confusing overproduction of *some* items with *general* overproduction. Certainly, it is possible to have overproduction for a short time of a specific commodity, say of shoes. But if there is overproduction of shoes, then there *must be underproduction of something else.* Any depression then could have been prevented by producing more of what was underproduced. The overproduction theory, so popular with all interventionists and would-be planners and little Mussolinis, can logically never be anything else than *wrong* production rather than *over*production. If that is not true, then Moses declared an untruth in Genesis 3:17-19. The fact, however, is that Moses did teach a sound principle. And the further fact is that there is overproduction of only specific things. But ignoring some specific overproduction, the *general* situation is underproduction, and a consequent *welfare-shortage.*

When, then, Postma and other religious leaders say that overproduction is our trouble and that the government should

intervene to prevent overproduction, they are advocating a program contrary to Scripture. Their diagnosis is wrong and their solution is wrong. They are like a surgeon who would cure a man by cutting off his toe when his appendix was about to rupture.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, contrary to prevailing Calvinist doctrine, believes with Moses and the great economists that the trouble with the world is a *welfareshortage.*

To teach that the problem of the maladjustment of men to things consists in a relationship of overproduction rather than a *welfareshortage* is to teach a doctrine which is unscriptural and which reduces Christianity's claim to intellectual respectability. fn

A Revival Of An Old Inquiry

In September, 1955 we published in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, pages 241-243, an article entitled, "We are in Favor of Justice For The Laboring Man."

This article follows:

We Are In Favor Of Justice For The Laboring Man

We make no secret that we are hostile to some labor unions as they operate in America. We have reasons for our opposition to certain labor unions.

1. They openly subscribe to the principle of *coercion,* which violates the commandments of God; see July, 1955, issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM; and

2. Even when they *in principle* do not subscribe to *coercion,* it is the *common practice* of many unions to engage in threats, violence and coercion. Honest men know that. Such unionism is the worst prevalent evil in American society.

Our readers may make an incorrect inference from the foregoing statement against which we wish to guard. The incorrect inference is that we are unfriendly toward

the wage and salary earner and unsympathetic to their problems. Some readers may infer that we are "capitalists" and exploiters and uncharitable.

We are not saints, but we have no toleration toward the grinding down of the weak, the poor, the unfortunate, the very young and the very old. We are mindful of the many curses in Scripture on those who exploit the poor, the widows, the orphans and the distressed. We believe Scripture and fear its warnings.

Karl Marx declared that capitalism (the system of private property approved by Scripture) "exploited" the workers. Therefore, he declared that property, especially such property as is used for production (land, factories, etc.), should all be collectively owned; and consequently no interest or dividends should be paid, that is, there should be no "return" on capital to a capitalist. All income received by the capitalist (the owner of the means of production) was "exploitation" of the laborer! The man who owned capital took a slice of what the laborer produced. (We cannot here consider the reasoning by which Marx reached that conclusion.)

Originally the church disputed Marx's idea. That idea was revolutionary compared to the old teachings of the church. But gradually Marx has prevailed. Today many theologians agree that capitalism unjustly takes something away from the worker. In other words, the worker does not get all that he should get.

Some theologians say that capital should get *nothing*. Then the conclusion *seems* to follow that if the capitalist gets anything, he must be doing so by robbery, by fraud, by force or by exploitation of the laborer. If so, it would clearly be *sin*.

More conservative theologians will say that capital should not get "too much" of what is produced; further, that capital formerly got "too much," and that in the past the worker was generally exploited; finally, that capital should get less than formerly and that there

should be a "just" distribution between capital and labor. This second attitude is the prevailing one in the Christian Reformed church.

The Calvin Forum is the magazine of the faculty of Calvin College and Seminary. The editor is Dr. Cecil De Boer. *The Calvin Forum* has frequently passed moral judgment on various political, economic and social problems. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM addresses the following questions to Editor De Boer. These questions are easy, but they pertain to the *most controversial moral question* of the age—the reward to labor and the return on capital. What is the answer of *The Calvin Forum* to the following:

1. Is capital entitled to any return?
2. Should that be a *just* return?
3. How determine what is a *just* return?
4. Does the return on capital exist because capital is productive? If so, is capital entitled to the *whole* return on its productivity?
5. Is capital entitled to part of what labor produces or is the laborer entitled to *all* that he produces?

We then wrote the late Dr. Cecil De Boer as follows:

I take pleasure in enclosing a copy of the September issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. You will see that in the lead article there is an inquiry addressed to *The Calvin Forum.*

We received the following letter in reply:

Thank you for your letter of September 28, and for the enclosed issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. Professor John Vanden Berg, an assistant professor of economics and one of the editors of *The Calvin Forum,* has consented to write an article for the *Forum* in which he will undertake to answer the questions you post in your lead article. I should have liked to contribute to the discussion; but for the time being I find myself about as busy as I care to be with a series of articles on the general topic of science and religion. . . .

Since then De Boer has died and *The Calvin Forum* has discontinued publication. On June 13, 1956 we wrote Professor Vanden Berg as follows:

> See the attached copies of two letters, one by me to the late Dr. Cecil De Boer and the other his reply to me. I wish to pursue the matter further, and would appreciate hearing from you if you have any information to give me.

We have not received any reply from Professor Vanden Berg.

We now address our inquiry to every significant group professing Calvinism — to the Christian Labor Association; the Free University of Amsterdam, Calvin College, etc. We repeat our questions. They are:

1. Is capital entitled to any return?
2. Should that be a *just* return?
3. How determine what is a *just* return?
4. Does the return on capital exist because capital is productive? If so, is capital entitled to the *whole* return on its productivity?
5. Is capital entitled to part of what labor produces or is the laborer entitled to *all* that he produces?

These questions are all related to the relation of men to things as well as men to men. And the answers given need intellectual respectability. fn

Questions About Our Fifth Declaration

Our Declaration No. 5 continues to be questioned. Recently we received a very interesting letter from Rev. Francis E. Mahaffy, a missionary. We are printing an extract from his letter:

> . . . after I read the initial issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, I had grave doubts as to how effective your paper would be. To me the paragraph on page 13 is a blot on the record. I refer to your statement, "The churches will be ineffective in mission work unless they are willing to declare boldly and loudly that prosperity follows the

Christian religion as his shadow follows a man. Why should anyone adopt the Christian religion if it does not pay to do so?" Later statements you have made I believe modify that extreme statement but I fear that that statement has harmed the good cause you are advancing. . . .

My opinion is that here you make the serious mistake of presenting only half the truth and in such a manner as to leave quite a false impression. In your attempt to point out in a striking manner the fact that obedience to God's laws and material prosperity have a cause-effect relationship, you gave inadequate consideration to conditions that interfere with that cause-effect relation. The world we live in is a sinful one. And so as a matter of fact you can not address an individual in this world and assure him that prosperity will follow faith. Only in certain very limited circumstances will that hold — where the individual is living in a land ordered by God's laws. In the context of the sin of this world you often have to say, as we must, to become a Christian will bring loss of material goods and perhaps even more. We have to urge people first to count the cost of becoming a Christian.

You ask the question, "Why should one adopt the Christian religion if it does not pay to do so?" This is something irrelevant to the law of cause and effect in relation to obedience to God's law. You are entering into the sphere of motives of people becoming Christians. It seems as though you would place it almost on the same level as a business deal. If I gain enough financially by the deal, I'll enter it, if not, I won't. Obviously that was not the approach of Christ or the disciples. The disciples did not follow Christ because it paid financially to do so. They and others who followed Christ often paid for their discipleship with poverty and death.

Mission work can not be placed on this basis. People should be called to accept Christ and the Christian religion because it is the only true religion. All other reli-

gions are false and evil. Only in Christianity is there salvation. Should people accept it from such motives as to whether it will bring prosperity or not, they are hardly the kind of converts we as missionaries or the church wants.

Certainly disobedience to God's law brings poverty as has been amply illustrated. It is correct that obedience to God normally and generally will bring prosperity. But we are living in a world turned upside-down by sin and so very often the reverse is true. Your placing the motives for accepting Christianity on the basis you do here seems to be quite foreign to the general tone of our Lord's emphasis on the nature of faith and discipleship.

If I have misunderstood you, let me know for I am sure many others object strongly to this paragraph of yours also and perhaps the record needs straightening. I think you would do a service to your readers to elaborate more on that point and correct erroneous impressions. . . .

We accept Mahaffy's comments as having merit. Some of the statements quoted by Mahaffy are, we admit, subject to serious misinterpretation. Mahaffy's letter clinches for us a conclusion that we were steadily being forced to, namely, that our Declaration No. 5 needs a further careful explanation. In some future issue we shall attempt that. We ask our readers to be patient. It may take us a little time to do this. fn

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